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AUTHOR Kirkland, Eleanor R.
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ABSTRACT

A rationale and procedures for teaching limited and non-English speaking children to read and write English by using the language experience approach are presented in this paper. The paper suggests that the language experience approach combined with a strong program in oral English development will provide such children with the opportunity to develop their English language skills. Five important elements of such an approach are identified as pupil-teacher dictation, individual key vocabularies, alphabet learning, writing independently, and using good literature as a motivator. The paper notes that it is important to link reading and writing and that readers written by children provide an important source of reading materials for other students. Examples are given of teaching methods and a section is included on how to plan, organize, and evaluate language experience activities. (MKM)

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LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE AND THE LIMITED AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILD

Presentation and Selected Comments
by

Dr. Eleanor R. Kirkland
California State University, Sacramento

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I'm sure all of you, at sometime or other, have had children in your classroom who come from homes where language other than English is spoken, or are limited in the use of English due to many reasons. They may have come from homes where there is no, or very little conversations - language is not encouraged. They may come from different cultural backgrounds. Within any cultural setting--customs, habits, beliefs and values often differ dramatically from home to home, and from neighborhood to neighborhood. A ten minute drive from any given point in a community may reveal significant cultural contrasts. Side-by-side on the seat of a school bus may be one child from a home that provides lavish comforts and wide cultural experiences, and another from a home where hunger and economic deprivation are so predictable as tomorrows sunshine. Needless to say, deprivation can exist in either setting. Far too often the term "disadvantaged" is associated with the conditions of poverty. The "advantaged" child may be one from a two room hut where parents care deeply for him and offer the kind of love and emotional support that nourishes self-esteem, security and integrity. Negative self-concepts, where parents and peers are so wrapped up in personal concerns that they deny children the basic needs of belonging and being loved.

Common sense tells us that the conditions of this kind of deprivation can exist in homes of the so-called "upper-class" as well as those called "lower-class".

(e.g. Bill Martin - family/children)

Today, we find more children in our classrooms without sufficient language skills to profit from the level of verbal learning taking place.

Although we do have children who display some difference, if we look more closely, we will discover they have more likenesses related to the other children in the classroom, or to all children worldwide.

Despite the diversity of tongues, children in all nations seem to learn their native language in much the same way. Children all over the world, regardless of their race, color, nationality, or where they live, be it on a small island in the Pacific, in Europe, Africa, South America or the United States - all produce the same sounds, in the same order. The infant laying in his bed, crib, or on the floor opens his mouth and a certain amount of air is expelled. The result - "ah" the sound we call a short "A".

It doesn't take much control of the muscles or amount of air that is expelled to produce the sound "ah". Again, it doesn't take much control to go mmmmmm. This is something new and the infants enjoys doing it. He will make this sound over and over again until quite accidently he produces two sounds together mmmmmaaaaaa. You know exactly what happens if mother is there and hears her infant make the sound ma. She repeats mama, mama - the child is being reinforced and encouraged to produce this sound again.

Another interesting discovery concerning this sound, is that in most of the children studied, the word for mother in their native tongue started with the sound - e.g., mutter, mater, etc. In research that has been done all over the world with infants, it has been found that children also make sounds that they will not use in speaking their native language (give e.g.). These sounds gradually disappear as the child learns the language spoken around him. Every language is learnable by young children and it is becoming apparent that little children have some definite ideas about how a language is structured and what it can be used for. (Example passed out). This dialogue is between a mother and a two-and-a-half year old girl. It was recorded in a thatched hut in an isolated Mayan Village in Ciapas, Mexico. Except for the fact that the topic was maize and the language was Tzeltal, the conversation could have taken place anywhere, as any parent/adult will recognize. The child uses simple, short sentences and her mother answers in kind. The girl expresses her needs and seeks information about such things as possession, past action, and so on. She does not ask about time, remote possibilities, contingencies, and the like - such things don't readily occur in the two-year-old culture - or in any language.

Children do not learn their native language because it just happens to be there - they learn their language because of their strong desire to communicate with others. It is this characteristic that sets the human being apart from animals - we do have a very strong desire to relate experiences, ask questions, describe what we have seen, and just to give a friendly hello.

In all cultures, the child's first word is generally a noun or a proper name, identifying some object, animal or person he sees every day. At about two years, give or take a few months, a child begins to put two words together to form rudimentary sentences. To get his meaning across, a child at the two-year stage relies heavily on gesture, tone and context. But even in two word horizons, children can get a wealth of meaning across (handout). The striking thing about this list is its universality. The examples were drawn from child talk in English, German, Russian, Finnish, Tukish, Samoan and Luo, but the entire list could probably be made up of examples from two-year-old speech in any language.

Later a child develops a rudimentary grammar within the two-word format. These first grammatical devises are the most basic formal tools of human language: intonation, word order and inflection. By the time he reaches the end of the two-word stage, the child has much of the basic grammatical machinery he needs to acquire any particular native language. These rules occur in varying degrees in all languages, so that all languages are about equally easy for children to learn. As the child learns to construct longer sentences, he uses more grammatical operations. He attaches new elements to old sentences such as "Where I can sleep" before he learns to order the element correctly.

When the child learns to combine two sentences, he first compresses from end-to-end (the boy fell down that was running) then he finally embeds one within the other (the boy that was running fell down.) These are the basic operations of grammar, and to the extent of our present knowledge, regardless of native language and social setting the underlying principles emerge so regularly and so uniformly across diverse language, that they seem to make up an essential part of the child's basic means of information processing. They seem to be comparable to the principles of object, constancy and depth perception.

Once the child develops these guidelines he spends most of his years of language development learning the specific details and applications of these principles to his particular native language.

Inflectional systems are good examples of the sort of linguistic detail that children must master. English-speaking children must learn the great irregularities of some of our most frequently used words. Many common verbs have irregular past tense: come, fall, break. Because he over generalizes rules he uses comed, falled and breaked. The power of apparent regularities has been noted in the children's language of every language studied.

A child is set to learn a language - any language - as long as it occurs in a direct and active context. In these conditions every child masters his particular native tongue, and learns basic principles on a universal order common to all children, resulting in our adult "Babel" of linguistic diversity. And he does all this without being able to say how.

Chukovsky emphasized this unconscious aspect of linguistic discovery in his famous book on child language - "From Two to Five."

> "It is freightening to think that an enormous number of grammatical forms are poured over the poor head of the young child. And he, as if it were nothing at all, adjusts to all this chaos--constantly sorting out all rubrics of the disorderly elements of the words he hears, without noticing as he does this, his gigantic effort. If an adult had to master so many grammatical rules within so short a time, his head would surely burst,... In truth, the young child is the hardest mental toiler on our planet. Fortunately, he does not even suspect this."

I hope I haven't taken too much time discussing the child's acquisition of language - the likenesses I spoke about earlier - but it does provide the background for the rest of the workshop and the reason for my next question.

Why do we ignore to a great extent, what we know about children and their language and continue to use materials that have very little relationships to their language or relevance to their experiences?

Why don't we take advantage of the child's language development and ability and go on from there. I have passed out to you some excerpts from the "Bullock report" (England 1975) which looked at the teaching of reading and the aspects of English. The Bullock report concluded with:

> We believe that an improvement in the teaching of reading will not come from the acceptance of simplistic statements about phonics or any other single aspect of reading, but from a comprehensive study of all the factors at work and the influence that can be exerted upon them.

It is in this respect that the language-experience approach reflects a global approach. The language portion encompasses the four facets of communication and is founded on the social-personal use of language. Experience encompasses an individuals perceptual and conceptual world, his interests and curiosities, his creativity, his culture, his capacity to adjust, to learn, to use and above all, his extraordinary flexibility.

Language experience is not new, it is not an approach that is used only in the English-speaking countries. I have worked with children and teachers in many parts of the world, as well as in California. All are using some form of language experience as a means to help children learn to read and write. I brought with me some samples of children's work. It has been used to help children who have limited language skills and those who are learning a second language.

We find in our schools today, greater diversity than ever before. It is not unusual to find Spanish-speaking children, Blacks, Asians (including Vietnamese, Cambodia, Laotions) Pakistians and other East Indians and various mixtures in the group. We have been looking carefully over the past several years, at the child's awareness of the English language, particularly the written word. We have concluded that it doesn't take young children very long before they begin to recognize many of the words they see around them. (Milk, stop, push (on doors) boys-girls (men-women), etc.

The same was true in Australia. I spent a year-and-a-half in Australia several years ago. Since World War II their population has changed to the extent that now over 35% are from Southern Europe and along the Mediterranean. One of the kindergartens I worked with in Melbourne had a very diverse group of children (kindergarten in Melbourne would be very much like our preschools, children are 3-5 years of age.)

Out of the 124 children attending in 2 sessions, they had identified 89 who spoke a language or dialect of a language other than English, and there were 11 different ones. In each case the children were recognizing words on food boxes, cartons, and cans; signs around the school, in the community, etc. In no way could bilingual teachers be trained to work in these situations - it had to be English

that was used and taught. In Queenland, I worked with the State Department of Education in helping develop a Language/Reading Development Program for the Aborigines. The major aim of the program was to help these children develop a facility in the use of of Standard English and to help each develop a favorable self-image.

In Isreal, a decision was made that all children coming to the schools (other than the Arab schools) would learn and be instructed in Hebrew. Consequently, children who speak another language learned to speak, read and write Hebrew.

A friend who teaches in South Africa at the present time, is working with children who had migrated from India. They did speak some English, but their skills were very limited. He had previously been a teacher in Canada where he had used the Language Experience approach also with the French Speakers.

Again, each of these examples exemplify the fact that children are more alike, than different, and that using their language as a means of helping them read and write works all over the world, regardless of the language/languages spoken.

Learning to read through experience attempts to bring reading and other communication skills together in the instructional program. Learning to read through experience makes possible the continuing use of each child's own experience, background in listening and speaking as he grows toward reading maturity.

What are the characteristics of the Language Experience Approach?

1. The communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are closely interrelated.

2. Reading is completely interwoven with all the other language arts.

3. Reading is concerned with words that arouse meaningful response, based on the individual experiences of the learner.

4. Spoken words are sound symbols which arouse meaning in the mind of the reader.

5. Written words are visual symbols which, when associated with known sound symbols, arouse meaning in the mind of the reader.

6. Reading is developing meaning from patterns of symbols which one recognizes and endows with meaning. Reading arouses or calls up meaning - it does not provide them.

In view of the continuing failure of traditional reading programs for these children, it is wise to develop schemes and approaches not dependent upon most produced materials. To this end, the names of Sylvia-Ahston-Warner, Roach Van Allen and Dorris May Lee and others come to mind. Progress towards a systematic, yet humanistic, organized, non-commercial approach is needed. It should be geared towards the native language of the child and should involve the best that can be found in past writings on the Language Experience Approach.

The Language Experience Approach to reading, promoted by Lamoreaux and Lee (1943) revised, extended and adapted by many educators since, has been used successfully by many teachers as a means of launching students into formal reading. The key advantage is that is is an ego-involved process. The rationale behind the approach evolves around the personal pronouns, I and me.

What I can think about, I can say.
What I can say, I can write.
What I can write, I can read.
What I can read, I can write, and what others have written for me to read.

It is highly personal, individualized approach that can serve as a bridge between the child's out-of-school experiences and his in-school learning experiences, if it is modified to meet particular situations and extended to include other strategies.

Too many times the second language learner is thrust into a process requiring him to decode a symbol representing a speech sound that simply does not exist in his speech repertoire. Most psychological systems are based on the assumption that the child can match English symbols to known speech sounds. This false assumption accounts for the failure of many programs that emphasize phonics to produce any significant results amount bilingual children. To further complicate the problem, bilingual children often are diagnosed as being weak in word recognition skills and are given remedial phonic instruction year after year. Lack of success breeds disenchantment and an endless cycle of failure and frustration results. These children should have much experience in encoding sounds into letter symbols before they are placed in highly structured phonic programs. The language experience approach provides this opportunity.

The limited language child cannot always "say what he can think about," in Standard English. The need for oral language development cannot be passed by, and the high potential of the Language Experience Approach is lost unless combined with a strong program of oral English development.

A limitation often cited relates to contrasts between "child talk" and printed English forms. e.g.

Book Talk	Child Talk
This is Linda	Thas Linda
Linda has a puppy named Ruff.	Linda gots a puppy.
The puppy is brown with white spots.	He beez wiff brown spots.
Linda is giving the puppy a baf	Linda begivida puppy a baf..
Bob is helping Linda.	Bob behelpin Linda.
Ruff is not happy.	Ruff, he ain't happy.

Inevitably questions are raised concerning the validity of forms of language used by children when considering the language experience approach for reading instruction.

1. Should non-standard dialect forms be accepted in children's writing?

2. When children dictate, should the teacher use spelling that matches the child's pronunciation?

3. Should experience writing from language different students be "edited" by the teacher and written in Standard English patterns?

In an experimental program to test the effectiveness of incorporating the grammar of black children in a series of reading materials for primary children, syntactical patterns representing such forms as "When I be running", my teacher say "Stop that," was printed under the label of "Everyday talk"/under the label of "School Talk" was the standard form "When I run, my teacher says "Stop that." The focus was placed on verb form usage and the syntatical patterns of black dialect for children to read. However, only standard orthography was used. (e.g., child who dictated and teacher wrote I be goin' to the pool.)

Although only a limited number of children were involved in the study, the results were considered to be positive by the researcher and the materials were put to use in 50 classrooms in Chicago.

There appears to be a general agreement among teachers that primary children should be encouraged to express themselves freely in oral language without interruption or correction. In reviewing the literature on non-standard spellings, no authority suggested that misspelling be used. Using spelling that "fits" the child's pronunciation can lead to confusion in learning sight words and using word attack skills. Teachers should refrain from placing value judgments on the content of experience stories or on the child's non-standard English.

We have come to know how difficult it is to change oral language habits. If unconventional (grossly unacceptable) forms of speech and misspelled words are reinforced through writing, we may be increasing the burden for the child further along the way. As much

as possible, the child should be provided with correct forms and spellings as he needs them. The following example may illustrate the points. As a group of children dictated a letter to Tony, who was in the hospital, the teacher heard:

Dear Tony.
Doa'n be seek.
Be comin' back.
We sorry you bin gone.

If we accept the idea that the teacher has the obligation to value the child's expressed ideas, but responsibility to present the alternative and offer the option of many conventional terms, the process might be as follows:

Teacher's Response:

"Yes, we don't want Tony to be sick."
"We can say, we don't won't you to be sick" etc.

As options are offered, speech patterns are expanded without deprecating the child's language. The teacher guards the child's meanings, but introduces new forms through alternatives. The process hopefully would result in modified forms and in conventional spelling such as:

Dear Tony.
We don't want you to be sick.
Come back.
We are sorry you've been gone.

As spoken language is the source of literacy, there are five elements in getting started. They are:

Teacher - Pupil Dictation (group or class)
Key Vocabulary (one-to-one)
The Alphabet (individual, group or class)
Writing Independently (individual)
The Use of Good Literature (group or class)

These five elements do not have a particular order, although many teachers find it easier to help children "catch on" to what reading and writing is all about by starting with the well known "Key Vocabulary" of Sylvia-Ashton-Warber. When reading excludes writing, the connection between the two is hard to make. Whatever program approach a teacher uses, every child must, sooner or later, realize the greatest miracle of all literate societies if that of "I got words in my head!" There is no faster way to this essential realization than by seeing one's own words written down. Let's take a brief look at each of the five elements.

Key Vocabulary: The Key Vocabulary activity is best done with a single child at a time, even though 6-8 may be sitting in the

circle. The teacher faces the challenge of helping children to know that their thoughts and ideas are wise, wonderful, helpful, and useful. She might say, "What is the best word in all the words in the world, that you know today?" In the beginning children may come and whisper their special word, their "magic" word in the teacher's ear. Later on they can hardly wait to give their word to their teacher - or to hear those of ther children. After the word is printed on a large, tough card with a thick, black marker - and read aloud by the child, the teacher asks that the letters be traced. This begins the critical habit of left-to-right, top-to-bottom, directional writing patterns of English. Soon the teacher calls out the letters of each word as it is being printed on the card. Later the child calls out the letters of the word as the teacher prints them. As each letter is identified, the teacher refers the child to that letter on the alphabet chart which should be near by on the wall at eye level. Side-by-side and very close, the teacher, provides a warm and positive setting for learning writing skills necessary for later legible penmanship. As each word is given and recorded in this fashion, the teacher then helps the child to "do something" with his word. He may copy it a number of times. He may draw a picture about it. He may use his word as a "story starter" or whatever, but it is his word. He knows it. He will probably never forget it.

The key vocabulary and teacher-pupil dictation become the most efficient means to make the child's language accessible to him so that he can write it.

The writing process begins first through the initial consonants, by use of labial sounds. (e.g.), M, B, D, etc. Sooner or later a child will give as his key word one that begins with a lip sound (a labial). Lip sounds are wonderful because the letter is visable on the lips. The child can feel a "B". The teacher can see it as the child says it. An example of this might be:

Ch. My word is "BIKE".
Tchr. Fine (and records it as the child says the word, or calls out the letters) now, boys and girls, listen to Mary's word.
Ch. BIKE.
Tchr. Now, start to say it but don't make a sound. I want to see what your lips look like. Good, now stir up the words in your head and give me another word that FEELS (NOTE!) FEELS the same way.
Ch. Ball, Baby, Billy, etc.

In this way the teacher has worked to make each child aware that any word beginning with that particular mouth formation, begins with a "B". So it goes for F, V, M, P. To this extent the child is resourceful enough to be independent of the teacher, certainly a desirable outcome for young children or beginning readers of English no matter what age or grade level.

A word of caution is needed so that the teacher not spoil the unique excitement inherent in key words. Using them only for initial phonemes (or consonant sounds) sets in motion an awareness of the connection of "words in my head" and written language. Other aspects of phonics can be taught with other activities, such as the experience charts and other teacher-pupil dictation.

The child has realized that the basic act of reading and writing is to gain meaning from these hen tracks we adults call letters and words. Of course, children who have learned to read in their native language have already developed this concept. However, using this technique with them reinforces the concept and helps them hear and feel the sounds of their new language. As mentioned before, all children do produce all the sounds of any language as infants, but as they acquire the language heard around them, sounds that do not exist in that language gradually disappear. All languages have unique sounds. The younger the child, the easier it is for him to reproduce and hear these sounds. That is why it is easier for a young child to learn a new language than an older child or adult who has been away from these sounds for a longer period of time.

But literacy requires more than just word recognition, even if the words involved are the most personal and important to the learner. Literacy also includes writing the words. The alphabet is a foundation of our culture, of our civilization. No society is literate without one, or something that serves as such, as is found in the Orient. The alphabet must be learned, as are numbers, in two ways: by rote or by individual one-to-one correspondence. To understand this, children learn how letters work to make words. Part of the problem is the decades of the "Alphabet Song" still popular which contains the phrase L, M, N, O, P. As sung, these letters become slurred together and they become the "ellemeno" problem. That is, the child is not aware that the letters in the song are separate in themselves.

The best way to resolve this, is identifying letters in key words as the teacher writes them on the card. The alphabet must become a useful, helpful resource, rather than a matter for endless drill and repetitive sing-song activity.

The physical display of the letter cards is crucial. They should be put on the wall at eye level within the reach of the child. Pictures that represent the initial sound, such as Ball for "B" are also very helpful. It is important that children go and match words, letter by letter to reinforce their recognition of how their own words are spelled.

As most letters in the alphabet sound enough like their name to be recognized, and there are just a few that have other sounds, the learning of letter sounds becomes a matter of saying a word, and then realizing how it starts, how it ends, and what is that vowel sound in the middle. e.g.:

Ch. How do you write most?
Tchr. Say it again.
Ch. Most.
Tchr. What is the first letter? How is your mouth fixed? What letter makes your mouth look like this? Look down the alphabet (she tries to help him find the letter without telling him).
Ch. (With mouth pressed to say the word most) It is the M.
Tchr. Right. Now say the word slowly - stretch it out - don't wreck the word - just stretch it out. What do you hear?

In this way the teacher develops the ability of the child to say the word he wants to know (to read or to write), slowly enough to recognize the sounds. Of course this will not work if the child articulates the letters in a separate fashion. The Bullock Report says it very well by stating:

"To teach a child that kuh-a-tuch says "cat" is to teach him something that is incorrect."

Labials are the easiest letters to learn, as are the long vowels which sound exactly like their names. As the child identifies letters and reinforces each act through the wall pictures and letters, the connection between the words "in my head" and the writing or print before him is so obvious that the basic fact of reading and writing becomes a logical, rational, utterly sensible human act.

Children must be surrounded by language, to hear, to see, to say and to write or to see it written, over and over. His words teach him the letters - not the other way around, for example, to teach pupils letters in order to learn words.

The next step of course, is <u>writing independently</u>. Once a child has a pile of words of his own that he clutches possessively, and has some examples in plain sight, such as experience charts, signs, labels, (not words in isolation, but in sentences), for reference and a teacher who knows how to motivate the child, he lacks not for content of original writing. Robert Louis Stevenson once said, "Life is so full of a number of things, etc... How can a person not know what to write?" Teachers don't have to lay awake nights to think of topics for the children to write.

You can start writing by setting up cassette tape recorders in a quiet place, where children can record thoughts, ideas and experiences. Listening to the tape again reinforces the crucial realization "I have words in my head". Writing can come from the outside as well as the inside, from pictures, not one, but dozens, from music, from poetry and of course from literature.

We can encourage writing by allowing children to write the words as he hears them, that is, a child in recording his ideas and thoughts, writes those ltters he thinks he hears. This is called inventive spelling. "Give" becomes gv, Dark, becomes drk, from, frm, etc. Teachers should welcome these signs of auditory discrimination rather than, as is so often the case, view them with alarm. If you feel that you must say something to the child, try this: "you are really hearing very well". You put down letters that you heard. That is good. As you get older, and as you learn more letters, you will remember thought that "GIVE" is written g-i-v-e. See, it has more letters than you heard.

Children do not mind rewriting their work if there is a purpose for doing it, such as having it bound and shared with other children in the school, perhaps being put in the school library. Children write pages when they have something to say.

Use of Good Literature is Another Motivator

Storytelling is common with small children as it should be with any age group. Unfortunately, as the grades advance, teachers mistakenly feel and worry about not having enough time. Storytelling or reading should be frequent not only in the early grades, but with older children as well, particularly the non-English and limited English speaking children. Nursery rhymes, poems, jingles, Dr. Seuss books are excellent to use with these children because of the repetition and patterning.

How Do We Link Personal Experience to Reading?

The rather complicated business of daily living in the classroom offers the first logical need for written communication and provides a means of linking personal experience to reading.

When children walk into the classroom on the first day to find their name on a card designating a desk or table as <u>their</u> place, they have begun to read. Antone Bergetilli is well on his way toward letter recognition if he recognizes and can write his own name. He had 16 letters in his name and that is over half of the alphabet. Pride in seeing one's name in print is reason enough to justify classroom name charts, but serves as well as a reference for letter sound relationships.

Classroom business and management calls for a number of signs, labels, directives, and service words, etc.

Labels: Bookshelf, Toy Box, Play House, etc.
Directives: Paint here, Find a Book, Read a Story, etc.
Task Charts: Feed Fish, Water Plants, Billy, Ramona, etc.

Service Words: Picture and words, scissors-cut, pencil-write, crayons-color, etc.

Happenings: Greeting on the chalkboard each morning may serve as the daily bulletin, but incidentally introduce and use over and over again those difficult to remember service words.

Such as:

Good Morning.
This is Tuesday.
We are going to see a Movie at 9:30.
We have a new boy in class today.
His name is Steven.

The easel is as important to reading as to artistic expression. Children's pictures symbolize meanings.

After all, language is not imprisoned between the covers of a book. Reading is speech pictured, printed and preserved on paper. A child is not ready to deal with the secondary form of speech before he deals with the primary form.

> Long before reading and writing, there is talk, listening and telling, sharing and asking, conversations and discussions - words, words and more words/pictures and films, things to touch, to feel, to explore - experiences, experiences, and more experiences/rhymes and rhymes, sounds and movements - activities, activities, and more activities/ bugs and beetles, fishes and frogs, plants and seeds and all things that grow and breath; wheels and levers, trucks and trains, and all the things that move and fly and float - discovery, discovery, and more discovery.

Children are collectors. They collect things, beetles, bugs, badges, buckles and bottle caps. Words too are a part of this assorted collection. The words they use in speech represent only a part of his total vocabulary. The words a child understands but is unable or unwilling to use represents the other part. There is no logical way to estimate the child's meaning vocabulary. Children follow the flow of ideas in adult conversations without actually knowing the meaning of many of the words used. The recognition vocabulary floats just below the surface of the child's speaking vocabulary, emerging gradually to join the stream of functional speech as the child matures.

The reading act is so intricately enmeshed in the cut-up process of language, culture, and social experience that it is very difficult to determine the manner in which a child first perceives written symbols as meanings. Whether the magic moment occurs when Antone sees his own name in print and says "that's me!" or whether it is a gradual process through which he comes to perceive printed words as talk written down, we cannot be sure. At any rate, we can be certain the at the process is much less complicated when the written speech closely approximates the speech used by the child's parents, peers, and associates. Clearly the child who

habitually uses non-standard forms of English, or who is speaking English as a second language, will have a difficult task, unless he is guided carefully through his first encounters with formalized reading.

It is Important to Link Reading and Writing

In the past decade or so, a great many reading programs have been published that reflect the influence of linguistic studies. Some focus on phonology glorifying the coding of grapheno-phoneme correspondence. Some have used the sounds of spoken language as the framework for series of reading texts. Still, others have incorporated linguistic activities as a part of techniques of word study and sentence structures. There is, however, a reading method that probably comes closer to a "pure" linguistic approach than any one of the published reading programs. It is the process of linking the child's speech repertoire to reading. The child's speech patterns, in what ever linguistic system, are transferred to printed symbols through dictation and later used as a linguistic bridge as the student does his own writing. It is this method, the language experience approach, that comes closer to implementing scientific principles, though many of the other so-called linguistic reading programs. The child dictator find his own real life experiences, those things that are interesing to him. The process proceeds from the spoken form to written form. The sound-to-symbol coding occurs as the child watches the teacher write the symbols that he produces vocally.

The content of the material represents the concepts that are a part of the child's cultural environment. This approach implements some of the linguistic principles held to be important in second language learning.

1. Words should be presented in spoken form before they are presented in written form.
2. Content should simulate real-life situations and relate as closely as possible to the socio-cultural background of the child.
3. Language is something you understand and say before you read and write.

Through the structural forms of functional language, the child encodes his own speech into written form. Through the process of transforming thoughts into words, seeing the words into printed forms, and then reading them, he automatically uses the melody and structure of his own speech patterns as both meaning and word recognition clues.

How Do We Help Children Move From Dictation to Creative Writing?

Creative writing begins on a simple scale. It may be a single word under a picture, or a simple phrase above a painting.

We Can Use Group Dictation

In the brief time it takes to ask a question, it is possible to direct children's attention toward a "happening" and then record emotional reactions. A sudden rash storm might be such a "happening."

With faces pressed hard against window panes, reactions are spontaneous. Written on the chalkboard or chart, the comments represent meaningful content for a "Talk-read" experience.

Makes me scared.
Makes me cold.
Looks like a river.
Sound like a drum.
Giving the tree a bath.

Concepts grow as children listen, observe, perceive, relationships they react.

At first, learning experiences are very informal, focusing heavily on direct observations, firsthand participation, and guided conversation. The classroom, particularly for bilingual students, may resemble a "variety store". Concrete objects serve as references for language growth. The child accumulates oral language as he experiments with real-life situations. (e.g., Vanessa - Rhesus - Monkey)

We should capitalize on transistory interests: pets, toys, insects, unexpected events, etc. With chalk in hand, the teacher can convert oral language to symbolic language by simply recording what students have observed or experienced.

Stories can be dictated by groups in the form of charts. Simple ones at first, about a surprise, a plan, a rhyme, a riddle, or a happening.

The chart tells the story of a shared activity. The teacher can write the story on the overhead projector, children watch the projected image on the screen. Visual acuity is sharpened as each letter takes form.

The Next Step is One of Initiating Problem-Centered Reading

Children have many interests. Teachers can develop units around a core of social living on science.

Observation, listening, spelling, and reading are coordinated as learning experiences are focused on concerns of the environment. The primary level child can be initiated into problem-centered reading as he engages in unit type activities centered around concepts such as:

Observation, listening, spelling, and reading are coordinated as learning experiences are focused on concerns of the environment. The primary level child can be initiated into problem-centered reading as he engages in unit type activities centered around concepts such as:

1. About self (pets, friends, toys, personal experiences).
2. About family (mother, father, siblings, role of family members, social life, customs).
3. About the immediate environment (neighborhood, food, clothing, shelter).
4. About current happenings in school, at home and in the community.
5. About the community (workers, community needs, safety and protection, transportation, communication, customs, holidays).
6. About the living world (plants, animals, insects, etc).
7. About the physical world (land and water, weather and climate, seasons of year, natural resources).

(Most of these would also interest children beyond the primary level.)

It is through unit type activities that the teacher can implement the language experience approach to its best advantage. Charts, records, daily logs, dictated stories, individual creative writing, class newspapers, booklets, and many oher forms of writing are put to use as children engage in relevant problem-solving tasks.

Earlier I mentioned Using Literature as a Motivator

To learn to chance the possibility that a child will eventually discover the enchantment of books is to overlook the entire purpose of reading instruction. Providing time for exposure to literary experience is just as important as providing time for skill instruction. Literary sensitivity is nutured through hearing language used powerfully. It begins at home, when parents read to their children. Hearing the rhythm of language through rhymes and songs, and repetitive lines of nursery tales, tunes the car to the melody of speech. For those who have not grown up with books (and for those who have - there must be time set aside for listening to the teacher read). Taped stories read by men's voices as well as women's, should be used to extend such opportunities. "Talking books" complete with taped cassettes allow the child to follow along as he sits at a listening center.

There have been a number of innovative projects utilizing literacy experiences as a means of raising proficiency in written and oral English, e.g., (Mexico - a new culture). A selection of folk tales, fanciful stories, myths and fables, were used as model stories. Children were made aware of motifs found to be comming in such selections. Basically, the motifs followed a pattern found in such stories as "The Three Bears, Billy Goat Gruff, or the Ginger Bread Boy." Teachers involved the children in many listening-speaking activities through which they heard and used repetitious lines of the selection again and again. After total familiarity with the story, the teacher elicited from students the motif of the model story.

Then as a group, the children composed a story in their personal language, incorporating the motif, but originating new characters and new dialogue. Results were exciting stories such as one about a tortilla who said "I ran away from a little old woman, I ran away, etc.

Literature certainly provides a wealth of some of the finest language upon which children can build their own understanding of English and extend their own personal language.

The Three Key Words to Reading Are:

Hear	See	Use (Most important)
Teacher must give many opportunities to hear language.	Children need hundreds of ways to put hearing and seeing language together.	Children must be given many opportunities to use this language.

There are many stories and rhymes that can be used.

FOR EXAMPLE

Preposition Books

Rosie's Walk - (Story of a hen is very good to emphasize prepositions).

1. Use as a flannel board story. Ask "where did Rosie go first? Next? etc." Use Rosie to move from place to place.
2. Use words in print, matching words with picture. The pictures discard pictures and use only word phrases.
3. Have children dictate stories, using other animals, other objects, but using the same pattern.

Use books to provide ideas and structure. Margaret Wise Brown, The Important Book is a good one. Another one with good patterning is I like Bugs" by same author.

Nursery Rhymes - such as:

Polly put the kettle on, etc. has a great deal of repetition and patterning.

1. Recite with children.
2. Write words on chart.
3. Cut apart - put phrases in pocket chart.
4. Then cut phrases into words - put in pocket chart in form of words.
5. Change words and we'll all have tea (what else).
   Change names

   _____ put the kettle on _____

Give children an opportunity to share ideas about a topic, theme, etc. List words given. The more words, the more ideas, the easier it is for them to write/dictate a story.

e.g., Dogs (what do you know about dogs?) - Write down what they say on chalkboard - word bank, etc.

bark
are little
have four legs
shed
are playful
have tails, etc.
have at least 9-10 listed.

The Poem - "I'm listening for Spring to Come" is another good one to use.

Change I'm listening for Spring to Come.
breezes to blow
bees to hum
brooks to flow
birds to sing.

And then I'll know it's spring.
(use watching, waiting, etc. in place of listening).

Change to:
I'm waiting for Halloween to come.
Christmas, etc.

Most of us learn by copying. Let children copy the patterns. They get more creative writing by getting ideas from the children and using patterns.

2-3 Grade Children

Discussing Frogs (after having read a book)

How do they look	What do they do	Where
green	jump	on a lily pad
spotted	hop	at a park
warty	sing	in a ditch
wrinkled	croak	with other frogs
ugly	dart	by a stream
slimy	serenade	among the rushes
wet	sit	in the mud
bulgy	catch	under trees
funny	perch	under ground
little	leap	in the reeds
hugh, etc.	stare	along the river, etc.
	blink	
	swim	
	float, etc.	

Put the words and phrases on cards. Children build sentences in pocket chart, read and copy.

Children memorize stories and poems. In "reading" children do make miscues, but many inappropriate ones. Children learn the patterns of written language in literature.

Making Big Books (use with small group). (You should have 5-6 copies of the book in regular size.) Select a book which has few words, and large pictures. Cut out the pictures and paste on large sheets of paper (or blow up pictures). Print the story on the page. Another alternative is to have the children illustrate.

Parent, older children can do it for you.

1. Read together the Big Book.
2. Story put on tape - children listen to tape and follow story in small books.
3. Children now read book by themselves - or selected parts.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

SOME INTERESTING FINDINGS CONCERNING CHILDREN AND READING--

After a child and father had read a book together, child asked father, "can you read with your eyes closed"? Father - "No" - "I can, I can say the words."

When children who have learned to read early (before 5), parents are not aware of it, or the process.

A 5-year-old who had mentioned talking was asked, "How did you learn to talk?" The response was "talk" - I don't know, I suppose the same way I learned to walk."

What can book experience do to help children reach this stage of reading? e.g., A mother was reading to a 19-month old child. After 3 or 4 readings, the child began filling in _____.

Brown bear, Brown bear
What do you see?
I see a _____looking at me.

This child was learning to look at books and reading patterns of written language:

- to predict what is coming next
- knowledge of what reading is all about
- what would make sense
- how to handle books
- become aware which way the story goes - where it starts, front and back of the book, from left to right (in English) stop sequence
- the language of reading

I would like to describe one way of implementing the Language Experience Approach. Earlier, I mentioned that language experience was used to help children who had migrated to South Africa from India become proficient in reading and writing. They call their program LEAP. After going through the initial dictating steps and acquiring some key words, the children in South Africa created their own reading material by building up sentences from word cards, and with the teacher's help, transcribing these to make up simple stories. He matches up the word cards with a core vocabulary of 120 basic sight words printed in two panels of his sentence-maker - a three - panel folder that displays the core vocabulary, with slots to hold a card for each word already learned. Additional personal words which he asks for to complete his news items and stories are written out on blank cards by his teacher or another student who is more advanced and enjoys helping him.

Having used these personal words to complete his story sentences, which he assembles in his sentence-maker stand, the child reads his sentence aloud and then asks the teacher or other students to record it for him in his storybook. Since he is now done with the word cards or the sentence-maker, he disassembles them and inserts the core words in their appropriate slots, matching as he goes, on the first two panels of his sentence-maker - his personal words go into the slots on the third panel. The folder is made of strong cardboard and can be easily folded away and stored in a cupboard or desk.

Once the child has discovered how to build up and read - and later, when he is able to record - his own reading material out of the word cards, he moves easily and naturally to letter cards and builds up words from individual letters. Thus, he does not have to rely solely on whole word recognition to read either isolated words or running material.

In this way, he learns phonics in a meaningful context. He sees the need to learn the sound values of letters, and he develops his own strategies and techniques in integration with his classmates. A unique advantage of using word and letter cards to explore and build language is that the child learns immediately what a word is (one of those clusters on a single card) and how it differs from a letter (one of those little cards with just one mark on it).

The transition from whole-word sight recognition to phonetic analysis and synthesis comes about usually when the child has learned about 200 sight words (the core vocabulary and about 100 personal words) and is obviously "chaffing at the bit". He no longer wants to go to the teacher or aide for all the new words he wants. It wastes time. He now desires to be independent, to build up the graphemic equivalent of the words he already knows and wants to use in his stories, which is where "inventive spelling" comes in. Children begin to write the words the way they sound, and the spelling of these words should be accepted at this time.

LEAP enables integration of reading, writing and art through the illustration of his stories. But integration can be taken further into the areas of speech, mathematics, science, spelling, etc.

Speech: In the area of oral language, the child can stand before the class, or in a group of children and read his sentences mispronunciation can be corrected by classmates. The other children can add words to a sentence. e.g., "I have a hat" to may be changed to "I have a new hat" this reinforcing as they extend the base sentence. Once he has done this and is more confident, he may read a story that he has written to the whole class, or share it with another classroom. Practice of this nature builds his self-esteem.

Dramatization: The child and some of his pals can dramatize a story they have written. e.g., "My Family". The child reads it and the other mimic the various parts. Everyone is actively involved while also obtaining practice in a very important skill, listening. The audience can judge the performance. To do this they also have to listen closely.

Verse: Children love nursery rhymes and poetry. LEAP allows children to compose their own poems and rhymes. Many times these verses can also be dramatized.

Mathematics: The children can learn to read and spell words such as one, two, three, which can be added to the personal side of his sentence-maker. He can use these words in sentences. "I have one red pen", etc. This practice reinforces what he has learned in math. He can sound the words in his sentences. "I am a boy" (4) "I am a good boy" (5). Teacher can ask "How many more words does the second sentence have? What is the third word?" In this way the child will learn both the cardinal and ordinal aspects of numbers.

Spelling: Children can play spelling games, e.g., one child can keep the sentence-maker in front of him and ask the other child to "spell" words in it. Then the child gets points for those that are correct. A slight variation can be introduced by laying the word cards face down on the table. One player picks from the pile, looks at the word without showing it to the other players, then asks one of them to spell it after he has read it aloud. The pitcher (relating to baseball) can award one point for correct spelling and another point if the batter can use the word in a sentence, thereby using word usage.

Activities Using the Sentence-Maker

The Word cards - the use of inserts (word cards) taken from the holder and set-up in the sentence-maker constantly reminds children of the way in which words are marked off from each other.

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Directionality: Building up their own sentences and recording these at some state reinforce the left-to-right sequencing of reading and writing in English. By actually putting the words into their sentence-maker, starting from the left-hand side, children get the feel of words working in meaningful conjunction. Subsequently, having teacher record their sentences and later recording themselves, provides immediate feedback.

Syntax: Words have to appear in a certain order to convey an idea, and herein lies one of LEAP's greatest merit, reading for meaning.

Words in Context: Children learned new words in context and not in isolation. LEAP overcomes rote learning. The importance of the position of the word in a sentence is constantly emphasized. A child can vary his sentence using the same word; e.g. "I am happy" and "Am I happy?" Partial sentences such as "I am..." allow children to think of different ways of completing the sentence. Sentences put in the sentence holder can be used to play games. One child can build a sentence, and after letting his pals read it, he can cover it and then ask them to remember what they say.

Matching, Practice and Reinforcement: There is a constant matching and reinforcement of core vocabulary by replacing word cards in the sentence-maker folder.

Grammatical Inflections: Such as -ing, -ed, -al, -ment, which are on separate cards, can be added to words allowing children to see for themselves how words change - walk, walked, walking. They also see tenses change, "I am a naughty boy", " I was a naughty boy." These changes can easily be made on just the significant word, not by rewriting the whole sentence, so that the learner's attention remains focused on the point to be learned.

Punctuation: Since there are full stop (period) and question mark places and cards in the sentence-maker folder, pupils learn how to punctuate and they see why punctuation is necessary.

Activities Using the Word-Maker

LEAP brings home to children the way in which words are made up. The word-maker allows them to experiment and to "create" new words by changing the position of the letters (not, ton) (was, saw) and to make other words by adding letters (tins, tinned, tan, tank, ten, tenth). A child does not have to ask the teacher "spell" for him. He can work out the words he wants on the work-maker. Classmates can help if necessary.

Pupils learn combination of letters, e.g., sh, th, pre, tion, and the need for and position of vowels. e.g., cat, tart, what. Interesting words building games can be played by taking out one or more phonemes and letting children make new words for which they receive points e.g., (ch) in, (t) in, (f) in, (u) in, etc. The word-maker can thus be used as an aid in teaching phonics.

LEAP readers written by children:

One of the greatest problems facing the teacher of limited-English and non-English speaking child is the shortage of suitable reading material. The child's own book, developed from his or her personal language experience, is a good starting point and helps to increase the reading drive. They child is simply rewarded when he has written a book. He had a book to read and to lend, and he knows that it is something which he has created. He can show off his productions to his peers. The gratifying feeling of writing to be read, provides him with the incentive to read and write more, and since he is self-motivated, he can produce a substantial amount of work in a short time. Progress in a pupil's all-around language development and the complexity of sentence construction can be seen in their sentences.

Of course, children are quick to correct one another's mistakes and often only consult with the teacher in cases of doubt. By correcting their own and other's work, children learn to criticize written English in an intelligent manner.

The children have a built-in need to record permanently what they made in their sentence strips. LEAP allows the children to illustrate their own texts. The illustrations are integrated with reading and writing skills.

By enabling children to read their own written language which is related to their spoken language and to their interests and needs, LEAP makes reading more purposeful and enjoyable than a highly structured, multi-component, teacher controlled reading series, backed up by voluminous teacher's manuals and work books.

Other Advantages

Individualization: Children work individually at their own pace and according to their interests. Because it is individualized, integrated and intrinsically appealing to the child, one of the big advantages in remedial situations is that it permits late developers to catch up and even surpass their peers.

Socialization: LEAP stimulates a great deal of cooperation among children. Even those using other reading materials are eager to assist these youngsters busy with LEAP. By assisting each other, children very naturally form their own work group. Such grouping is fluid.

Interest and Scope: There is no limit to the amount of work which can be put in, nor is their any "age restriction." Special class children of all ages enjoy working with LEAP. It is readily adaptable and the teacher can supplement the approach with games and activities which add interest and zest to the program.

Chain games are fun - "He...has...a...big...dog...
Who...bites...people" points can be given to the children who make the longest, most interesting chain.

LEAP is as open, free and fresh as the Child's mind. being child-centered, and holistic and creative in its thrust, it enables the child having difficulties to succeed in reading and writing where he or she hitherto has failed.

How to Plan, Organize and Evaluate Language Experience Activities

Planning and Organizing:

The most crucial elements in planning and organizing the Language-Experience Program usually are the statement of goals, roles and responsibilities, allocations of time, equipment, supplies and efforts to elicit local support.

Goals:

These must be stated at the beginning so that they can be evaluated after a given period of time, such as one, two or three years. The short-term goals of the Language Experience Approach are similar to those of most other reading programs, except that they include all of the language areas; listening, reading, writing and spelling.

1. Understanding the usefulness of language and reading - leading to a sense of mastery over one's environment as well as a healthy self concept.

2. Enjoyment - leading to a love for language and reading.

3. Fluency - in speaking, reading and writing.

And these long-term goals:

1. Flexibility of rate and style of reading - leading to better skills in reading, poetry, recipes, etc., as well as studying of social studies, science and math.

2. Ability to use a variety of resources -e.g., on index, encyclopedia, atlas, etc.

3. Developing reading tasks.

Roles and Responsibilities:

These must be stated clearly and precisely, perhaps even listed on a classroom chart or in a handbook, because you want a team effort to operate smoothly. You must look at the role and responsibility of the teacher. The teacher is the key-stone upon which the Language Experience Program rests. The aide is the teacher's right hand. The aide prepares teaching materials and supplies, works with individual children, assist in book reading, clean-up and transition.

Other teachers at continguous grade levels

These teachers must understand and support the program insofar as they serve students who have either been in it, or will go into it.

The Student is responsible daily for writing at least a few words (EVENTUALLY A WHOLE PAGE); and for daily "languaging" i.e., reading, talking, listening, writing cooperatively in a small and/or large group either as a leader or a follower for weekly sharing, etc.

Principal, other administrators must support idealogically the Language Experience Approach and explain to the community whenever necessary.

Parents - must understand the goals of the program; support it by donation of time, materials and efforts; feel free to criticize it honestly; and perhaps most importantly, follow through at home by writing and reading with their children.

Allocating Resources such as

Time -

Furniture: Such as large tables for group work and interest coilers, bookcases, (that can double as room dividers), low blackboards, bulletin boards, easels, flannel boards, low display shelves for children's work - books and other creation, etc.

Supplies: Plenty of pencils, erasers, chalk, crayons, marking pens, staples, glue, paint, brushes, clay, rulers, newsprint (lined and unlined) construction paper, experience chart paper, paper cutter, tape, scissors, staplers, string, yarn, needles, etc.

Audiovisual equipment - film and filmstrip, projector, phonograph, television, tape recorder, camera, - an opaque projector would be useful, but not absolutely crucial..

Charts - helpful "reference type" charts, including an alphabet chart, a handwriting chart, useful words, etc.

Puppets - as many as possible, or materials to make them.

Books and other reading materials - enough materials so that children can have new things to read and leaf through daily - all kinds - non-fiction books and pamphlets, magazines, a few newspapers, catalogs, telephone directory, reference books, as well as a large collection of fiction, poetry and rhyme.

Picture File - one with provocative as well as pretty pictures. Cover them with contact and put them where they will easily be reached by the children.

Others - Hot plate for cooking, materials for cleanup, mirror globe, musical instruments, toys and equipment for a playhouse, animal cages, games, puzzles, manipulatives, equipment for gardening and junk.

Eliciting Local support - Help is all round the classroom teacher. Collectively, the school and community can offer moral support, practical suggestions and donations of materials. Other teacher can share equipment, supplies and other children to help take dictation, make books, etc. The community at large can help by sharing their interests and interesting residents, parents, of course, are the most important helpers.

Teaching:

Group Teaching: The teacher may began by engaging the whole class in an exciting experience, such as bringing in one interesting live animal, which the children can see, touch, feel, pet, and smell. Next, the children report their sensory experiences, which she writes in manuscript on a large size experience chart. she writes in their dialect, vocabulary, and sentence length; however, she supplies adult capitalization and punctuation. She asks the class to compose an appropriate title. Next she makes word, phrase and sentence strips to match up against the experience chart, and the aide types that story on a ditto, and give each child a copy for inclusion in his/her folder. The children can work in pairs and in small groups to review words, phrases, sentences. Eventually, the children learn to read parts of the page. As a child learns each word, that word is written on a card to be filed in his "word bank".

Individual Teaching: The teacher may begin with a common classroom experience and follow through by visiting with individual children who dictate their thoughts. Or, she may elicit personal remarks without any prior common classroom experience. She prints them carefully near the bottom of the child's paper, leaving plenty of room for the child to illustrate his story, and sufficient room below for the child to copy or trace the letters. After illustrating

his story, the child reads and rereads his sentence/story aloud until he is fluent enough to read it to a group. Later he may share it with the whole class.

Common Experience: This may be a demonstration, or display, field trip, and art or craft construction or cooking experience, or even a story or poem read by the teacher. The common experience is followed by group discussion. The writing comes next as explained previously.

Group Discussion: The teacher needs to cultivate spontaneity and must reward originality and also expand simple ideas, for example, the children may complete the sentence, "I like...," in a variety of colorful answers, "I like to play," "I like my dog," etc. The teacher can ask simply, "why?" and expand these simple sentences to even more penetrating ones such as "I like to play hide and seek" or "I like my dog because he lick my face and gets me all gooey."

Skill Teaching: This is done individually and in small groups as each child shows a needs. At first, contextual reading and the recognition of sight words are used exclusively; soon some phonics may be introduced. In time other word attack techniques, phonics, structural analysis, dictionary usage, are taught. The teacher should have a checklist (a scope and sequence) that can be used to maintain a balance between children's immediate and eventual needs.

Practice Activities: Children may practice their words, sentences, stories by themselves, to a partner to to an aide; practice their skills (as needed) on a chalkboard, on a ditto, a puzzle, rhyme, etc. or some other creative way: work at a center, write (dictate) another story; paint a picture and write a sentence which labels it, read and reread the sentence and prepare to read it to a group, or copy another story or poem. The children may also dramatize (with or without puppets) and make music to their stories.

Word Banks: These can be both for individual (tiny 1 x 2 inch cards) use of for group (larger 4 x 6 cards) use. Individual word banks are usually arranged alphabetically, while group banks may serve better when arranged by category; animal foods, action words, words that mean "said", science words, sport words, words for feelings, big words, little words, travel words, play words, home words, school words...

Creative Writing: There should be some creative writing going on all the time (i.e., a class book containing children's contributions on a given topic (holidays, science or social studies, etc); correspondence with persons in the community and beyond; weekly newsletters home; original poems, fables, haiki, recipes; "how to's", the list is endless.

Evaluating: Evaluation must be daily, natural and continuous. Copies of children's work may be kept in a folder and examined for progress. Also, the specially designed skills checklist may be reviewed, summarized and reported.